

A

LETTER

To the Revd.

Stephen Radcliffe,

VICAR of Naas.

Occasion'd by a Letter of His to the Revd. and
Learned Mr. *Edward Synge*, Prebend. of St.
Patrick's, DUBLIN.

*Et errat Longe mea quidem Sententia,
Qui Imperium Credat gravius esse aut Stabilius,
Vi quod fit, quam illud quod amicitia adjungitur.*

TERENCE.

Were all thy Tribe Like thee, it well might startle
Our Lay unlearned Faith, when thro' such Hands
The Knowledge of the Gods Is reach'd to Man.

ROWE'S AMB. STEP.

By R. M. Weaver.

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A
LETTER

To the Revd.

Stephen Radcliffe, &c.

Ridentem dicere Verum
Quid vetat? Horace.

S I R,

As Authors, especially young ones, have naturally an eager and impatient Curiosity, to be inform'd of the Opinions of the World, concerning their Performances; I hope you will esteem it a Mark of my sincere Friendship and Affection, that I impartially acquaint you, what Judgment the Polite and Judicious have pass'd on your Labours. And since you have now attempted to become (if I may be pardon'd the Expression) an Author, you must learn to smile at the Censures of the Wise and the Learn'd, tho' they criticize with the greatest Justice, and exclaim against your Writings as senseless, dull, insipid, and ill-natur'd; for these are things which inevitably fall to the Share of Genius's of your Rank, and what many of much greater Abilities



Abilities have justly been tax'd with : But as I promise my self you had not the least Intention to please such Persons, Men of a Taste so contrary to your own, you are so happy as not to be disappointed in that Respect.

But to my Story :

Sit mihi fas audita loqui.

I happen'd the other Night into the Company of some Gentlemen, Eminent for Learning and good Sense, where, after we had discours'd upon a Variety of other Topicks, one of the Company ask'd us, if we had yet seen a Piece written by one *Radcliffe*, seemingly, against *Popery*; he had scarce mention'd it, when I observ'd a General Consternation and Surprise in every Face; which, as I was afterwards inform'd, was occasion'd by that Expression—*AGAINST POPERY*—(ev'ry Person then present knowing you to have been in the last Reign, the most strenuous Advocate *Romanism* had, among the Sons of the Establish'd Church.)

THEIR Amazement had deprived them of the Use of their Speech, 'till he who first started the Question, thus continued.

I suppose by your Silence, Gentlemen, you have neither heard of the Man, nor his Writings;—Lord!—he's— that great, overgrown, lubberly—indolent—ignorant Priest—distinguish'd from Men of Sense, by his Compositions;—from all others by his Bulk, Voraciousness, and Avarice; and from the Rest of his ingenious Brethren, by the Title of Vicar of *Naa*s—I'll be hang'd (cry'd one) if this be not he, who lately run mad for the Loss of a long-expected Benefice!—A Member of the *Tripe Club*, (crys another)—Sir, said the First, his scurrilous Pamphlet proves to a Demonstration, that its Author has had a great Revolution in his Reason; tho' I must say, I thought as much, when from ev'ry Pulpit he bellow'd Exclamations against the *Non-facientes*, making *Solomon*, (who lived some Centuries before such Distinction of Parties) call them a * Generation that curseth their Father, and doth not bless their Mother; nor was there any one, who in the least doubted the Justness of my Conjecture.

You

* This alludes to a Sermon of Mr. Radcliffe's, on Prov. 30. and 11 Verse, preach'd in many Churches of this City in 2^d of James's Reign,

You may believe this Discourse gave me some Uneasiness; I can't say I defend your Character, but, as I was conscious that all these Assertions were absolutely true, I was at a Loss how to undertake so difficult a Task;

Pudet hac Opprobria tibi

Et dici potuisse, et non potuisse refelli.

My Thoughts were instantly employ'd in examining every part of you, in hopes to light on some one good Quality of yours to urge in your Defence, but vain (with Concern I speak it) were my Hopes, and fruitless my Reflections; my Thoughts, like that Species of Men call'd Gold-finders, had but search'd a Jakes, without finding any thing to reward the Disagreeableness of the Operation.

At last I desired to see your Letter, which was immediately produced, and by Consent of all present publicly read. And I must assure you that the Remarks then made, are the Sentiments of every one with whom I have since convers'd.

WHEN the first two Paragraphs were read, wherein you acknowledge Mr. *Syngs* to have * Ingenuity, and Candour, and compliment him on his Success in his Disputes with the *Jesuits* and *Friars*; not a Mouth but was instantly fill'd with the Applauses of your Antagonist. One said, that he preach'd like a primitive Apostle (which, by the way, I never heard any dispute of:—) Another that he was an Honour to his Country, and an Ornament to his Profession; like his Sire, a zealous Supporter of the true Religion, and an Encourager of Piety, and Virtue; by many follow'd; lov'd by most; and admir'd by all; which certainly is the Character he bears among all Ranks and Degrees of Men; and which, though they might be accounted Compliments, if applied to others, are really far inferior to his Merits.

In short after a considerable Time was spent in enumerating his Virtues, we proceeded to examine the rest of your Letter; like Men who turn away from a most delightful Prospect, to peep into a Charnel-house.

AND here I must inform you, that it is not at present my Intention, to acquaint you what Parts they thought arrogant, silly, impertinent, and such like; because as there is scarce any Sentence, nay even a Word, or Expression in the whole, which is not justly liable to one, or all of those Imputations, I shou'd swell it to an excessive Bulk, and make it like the Author and his Letter, a huge Bundle of Imperfections. You

* Page 3. of the Letter.

You write (*Page the 4th.*) that you found it a most difficult Matter to keep up the Attention of your well-meaning Neighbour. Now, as no Man of Sense will believe, that an ingenious, rational, well-pen'd Discourse, (such as are all those that have Mr. *Synges* for their Author,) cou'd ever naturally produce such an extraordinary Effect; and as the World believes you design'd it as a very curious Remark, I shall endeavour to account for it.

SINCE the Discourse cou'd no more produce such an Effect, than Light cou'd in it self be the Cause of Darknes, the whole Glory of that Operation must necessarily fall between you and your Neighbour; But lest it shou'd create any Difference between you, I will strive to divide the Honour to both, as equally as I can possibly.

As to your Neighbour; his want of Attention might be occasion'd, either by the Weakness or Deficiency of his Judgment and Understanding; or by your disagreeable Delivery, or Tone of Voice; or (as the World generally believes, and is most probable) by both.

Now that he wanted Understanding, is evident from his own Words, (*Page 5.*) where he says, he doth not understand him: And yet the Divine has convey'd his Sentiments in Expressions intelligible to all who have the least Glimmerings of Reason: His Reasoning is clear, convincing, and unconfused; and suited as well to the lowest, as the most extensive Capacity. Nay he acknowledges plainly, (*Page ibid.*) that his not understanding what he heard, proceeded from his own Ignorance: In which we shall leave him at present, to pursue our Enquiry, whether your Delivery might not justly be thought the Cause of his Inattention.

AND this Truth universal Experience quickly determines. There not being I believe ten in this City, of those who can boast the Happiness of hearing you preach, who can deny you the Glory of having found, as well as * *Jack*, that valuable Secret of contriving a soperiferous Medicine, which you convey into the Ears of your Audience, by which you never fail to lull at once their Cares, and their Devotion asleep.

BUT perhaps, Enemies to your rising Credit, will here say, that you never have this sleep-procuring Power so much, as when you draw out your own insipid Compositions. Why, all

* *The Tale of a Tub.*

all this I grant :—But yet I answer, that the best Discourses, if deliver'd by you, will have the very same Force; for I can swear, from my own Experience, that I saw a whole Congregation sink gently into Slumbers, while you repeated to them a Sermon of the Learned Doctor Perkins's on Moderation, and I must own, I cou'd hardly keep my self from nodding; but you know—*Aliquando bonus dormitat Homerus*—and indeed, if we seriously consider, how cou'd Matters happen otherwise; for who cou'd be induced to attend, or be pleas'd with the most elegant Discourse, if an—Afs was to be the Orator?

I can't forbear applauding you for your quoting Doctor Hammond. For tho' that great Divine in reality says no such thing as you quote, yet how few will beat the Pains of examining his Works, only to discover an arrant Piece of Forgery in you, who art already eminently known in the World for numberless Qualities of that kind. Tho' I must say, I am sorry to find such an absurd Comment charged upon so great a * Father, and Pillar of our Church, as Doctor Hammond, by a Person so prodigiously inferior to him in Judgment, and every other valuable Quality.

You have made two very curious Remarks, for which I am sure the learn'd World ought greatly to esteem you; the first (Page 17.) is, that you sincerely believe, when Men are dead they are absolutely incapable of further Instruction; the other, (Page 18.) that you strongly suspect the Disciples did not wish for fire from Heav'n to consume the Samaritans first, in order to convert them afterwards. Two Observations, worthy of your self! so true, that no Man in his Senses will dispute the justness and certainty of them.

When that Distick of English Verse which you mention (Page 29.) was read, after many and various Conjectures concerning it, we at last found it to be taken from Spencer's † *Fairy Queen*; but you had alter'd the Expression, and the Sentiment so much, that we cou'd scarce know it in its Disguise, like Beggars who steal away Noblemen's Children, and so distort their Limbs, and wrap them in Rags, that they are scarce to be distinguish'd from their own vile Offspring. For, as the Poet wittily expresses it,

When

* See Page 11. of the Letter.

† *Fairy Queen*, Book 1. Can. 9. Stanza 43.

*When an Ass, or a R—d—c begins for to bray,
Each Brute, by his Voice, does his Vileness betray.*

Methinks it was something unkind of you to make all your Brethren of the inferior Clergy as odious Pedants as your self. You won't permit them to murmur, without an— *Eheu ! Quantum mutatus !* and a *Qui color albus erat, &c.*— not one Protestant Layman dares open his Mouth without a— *Cui bono !*— and an— *Incidit in Scyllam cupiens, &c.* nor is *Jonah* permitted to speak in his own native Language : And I assure you that all the Scraps of antient Authors, which I have scatter'd thro' my Letter, were wholly design'd to fit it to your vitiated Taste.

Do but recollect the solemn Promise you made at the Altar, when you was admitted to Priests Orders: That you wou'd, the Lord being your Helper, labour to maintain, and set forward as much as in you lieth, Quietness, Peace, and Love among all Christian People. Is this the Way to promote Peace and Love, by black'ning the Character of the Wise, and the Innocent, with Scandal and Calumny ? to write in the very Gall of bitterness against a Divine, because so much your Superior in Virtue and Knowledge ? how great a Resemblance is there between you and the ambitious *Ephesian*, who set Fire to the Temple of *Diana*, only to be remember'd, tho' always remember'd with Infamy and Disgrace !

WHEN your Letter was thus far read, I was ask'd, how I cou'd account for your passing over the Faults of your own Letter ; (which, they said was ridiculously bad in ev'ry respect,) when you pretended to be so quick-sighted in discerning the Faults of others ? as it was a sudden Question, I thought I cou'd not give a better Solution of it, than from a Passage in a famous * Treatise, that Authors of your kind being altogether employ'd and taken up with the Faults, and Blemishes of other Writers, their Imaginations are so possess'd, and replete with the Defects of other Pens, that the very Quintessence of what is bad does of Necessity distil into their own.

I shall take my leave of you with a few Verses written extempore, by a Gentleman then present, who desired they might be carefully sent to you, and are as follows.

YOU'RE

* *Tale of a Tub.*

(7)

You'RE like the Viper in the barb'rous Land,
That seiz'd revengeful the Apostle's Hand,
That strove to fill his sacred Limbs with pain,
But strove to hurt his sacred Limbs in vain:
The Godlike Man with Scorn the Beast surveys,
Derides its Rage, and with its Venom plays,
With Malice thus does Innocence engage,
As He excells in Virtue, You in Rage.

*May SYNGE, whose Mind's adorn'd with eu'ry Grace
As First in Wisdom, be the First in Place,
Do you in all your native Dullness shine,
Be Sense his Talent, be Detraction thine.*

F I N I S.

